

21 January 1953

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Outline for Briefing of [REDACTED] Group

I. Likelihood of General War

A. Introduction. The Soviets aim at world domination sooner or later. (SE-35, P2) They have no inhibitions whatever about methods to achieve this, but prefer political warfare methods so long as these appear to be working. (An obvious reason is that they would prefer to take over a going concern rather than a shambles.) Moreover, the Kremlin has a very strong, if not dominant, concern for the security of the Soviet regime and the physical security of the USSR. The Soviet leaders are ineradicably suspicious of Western intentions, and although their ideology --- which still affects their view of what the West will do, although they have pretty well abandoned it internally --- tells them the West will fall apart from its own contradictions, particularly economic rivalries, it also tells them that the West might strike out at the USSR in one last capitalist paroxysm.

B. Ways in which General War Might Come. In the light of this underlying philosophy, and of the general situation now prevailing and likely to continue over the next decade, general war might come in any of the following ways:

1. Deliberate Soviet initiation. The Soviets probably would not deliberately set off a general war, from scratch, unless they were confident that they could deal the US a crippling blow and also that they could ward off or forestall an extremely serious counter-blow by us. (NSC 135) (NIE-64, Part II). The same applies to Soviet

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moves that would not clearly start a general war, but would in their judgment involve a serious risk of starting one.

2. Soviet reaction to Western action. If the Soviets in fact believed that the West was about to launch a "preventive war" or if the Soviets believed that a Western action jeopardized USSR security (whether or not intended by the West to lead to general war), then the Soviets might start a general war. (NIE-64, Part II) (SE-35- P15) -

3. Soviet miscalculation, or a deadlocked situation in which the Soviet Bloc or the West undertook actions that provoked a chain of counteraction leading to general war without either side so intending. (Ibid.)

C. Likelihood of General War Coming in These Ways at Present.

1. Unlikely.
2. Not likely now as to first part. Second would require stronger Western action than now being taken. (E.g., Korea, Iran.) (64-II)
3. Always possible now in Korean situation especially. Also Berlin.
Middle East

D. Developments and Variables that Will Affect this Likelihood.

1. Soviet acquisition of one-punch striking power and "effective" air defense.
2. Development of Western striking power and readiness to the point where the Soviets fear a Western one-punch attack as imminent.
3. Change in power balance favorable to the Soviet Bloc. Soviets would be more likely to resort to aggressive acts involving risk of war. (SE-35, para. 15) West might be forced into more risky counter-action.
4. Change in power balance unfavorable to the Soviet Bloc. If a Western gain appeared to the Soviets to involve a "grave threat"

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(SE-35, P15)
to the security of the USSR, the danger of war would go up sharply. If Western gains consisted in the strengthening of key areas already in the Western camp (conspicuously German and Japanese rearmament over a period), the danger would also increase but more gradually -- and Soviet concern might be mitigated to the extent that it still appeared possible that these gains would be vitiated by disagreement within the West over objectives or otherwise. If Western gains merely stalemated the conflict more or less on present geographical lines, and thus made Soviet world domination remote or even unlikely, Soviet concern probably would not increase greatly enough to raise the danger of War. (JIC disagrees).

E. Changes in the Likelihood of General War in the Light of These Variables. The intelligence community cannot predict the timing or extent of these variables nearly well enough to say that any one year or period of a few years will be more critical than others during the next decade. We do say that the danger of general war is great and likely to remain so (SE-35), since all of the variables tend to increase the likelihood of war -- or at least could do so unless handled with great wisdom on the part of the West -- and all are quite possible developments, though the first two might tend to cancel each other out.

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(N.B. Parts II and III represent CIA views only, unless otherwise stated.)

II. Medium-Term (6 mos-2 years) Warning of Developments Tending toward General War

A. Machinery for Medium-Term Warning. Under present procedures, the intelligence community examines medium-term Soviet Bloc intentions (i.e., for 1-2 years forward) systematically through National Intelligence Estimates, produced by CIA with the concurrence or dissent of State and the services. Beginning this year we expect to do these on a two-year projection basis, preceded by a careful re-examination of every aspect of Soviet Bloc capabilities for the same period.

B. General Medium-term Indicators of the Likelihood of General War. In the period 1938-40 the Soviets indicated their expectation of an early war by a number of general moves such as a sharp reduction in tractor production in favor of military vehicles and a drastic cut in the number of students starting on long scientific training programs. The purges culminating in 1938 were also related in part to the expectation of general war, being meant partly to ensure the loyalty and subservience of the military. However, the present state of Soviet military strength-in-being, industrial preparation, and personnel training is such that no real shift in emphasis would necessarily be expected to be visible, even to the closest scrutiny, as much as six months in advance of a hostile move. Even purges affecting the military or security forces would not necessarily be significant, since the general loyalty of these forces is considered to be at a high level anyway and a purge would be more likely to come from purely domestic reasons.

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The most you can say is that deliberate initiation of general war would be less likely for a period of a few months after a major purge; after that few months, general war might be more likely than before the purges, but you could not put great stock in that as an affirmative indicator. Nor would we necessarily get any clue from the tone of Soviet propaganda or from the utterances of high Soviet officials. Soviet propaganda has already reached great heights of invective, especially against the US, and while it is not at the levels reached against the Nazis during the war, the step-up is probably small enough so that it could be made without undue strain after a war was under way. As for Soviet top level statements or speeches, we set some store by these to gauge the general temper of the Kremlin, but if the Kremlin aimed at surprise it could certainly dispense with advance exhortation to the faithful. They don't need it now, or at least not nearly so much as in the past. And, finally, I regret to say that in spite of our best efforts we are not now confident of having any direct medium-term intelligence of Soviet strategic plans.

C. Warning of Increased Likelihood of General War Arising from a Change in the Power Balance. If the change in power balance involved a taking over of territory, such as loss of Indochina or a Communist take-over in Iran, we would of course know about it, probably well in advance, and would have some idea of its consequences. However, the Soviets might well try to follow up rapidly on such a success -- to take advantage of the favorable psychological situation -- so that there could easily be a fast-moving series of events leading closer to general war. If the change in the power balance came about through a gradual

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increase in strength on one side or the other (such as German or Japanese rearmament on the Western side, or, on the Soviet side, an increase in East German strength so that the East Germans alone could overwhelm the Western garrison in Berlin), then there would probably be some indication of how the Soviets were reacting to this, perhaps by diplomatic action or threats, so that we would have some general idea whether they were more inclined toward general war as a result.

D. Warning of Increased Likelihood of General War arising from a Change in the Striking Power of Either Side. If the Soviets suddenly came into possession, in operational quantities, of a weapon that greatly increased their power to hurt the US, and if they were sure they were ahead of us, the danger of general war, particularly by surprise attack, would surely rise sharply. We can't be sure how much notice we would have of such a development. We do have ^{some} ~~a pretty good~~ line on their atomic capabilities, and the necessary testing of a thermonuclear weapon would almost certainly be spotted and correctly evaluated. Moreover, we have some evidence of their air training, and we believe a substantial long-range navigational training program, involving bases in Germany or overflights of Germany, would precede a mass air attack. Our information on guided missiles is good enough and recent enough so that we are pretty sure they won't come up with a drastically new air-to-surface or surface-to-surface missile over the next five years, and if they actually came up with an inter-continental missile we would probably be able to spot that at an early testing stage, at least three years before it

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became available in operational quantities. But we have plenty of weak areas: - medium jet bombers, which we know they have been developing, could be around in large numbers before we were aware of their being operational. And in air defense and civil defense -- important because of the virtual certainty that the Soviets would not strike unless ~~2301008~~ confident of their own defensive capabilities -- we know a lot about [REDACTED] but only the most general facts about such things as anti-aircraft guns and airborne intercept development. And all of this is in fields where we have a good idea what to expect. The Soviets might develop wholly novel weapons -- ~~[cosmic rays for example]~~ -- on which our intelligence would be way behind. All in all, the odds are that we would get some notice of almost any development that radically improved Soviet striking power, but we certainly could not guarantee it.

E. Summary. Our prospects for medium-term warning are generally not bad, but the odds are heavily against any precisely timed warning as far ahead as six months.

III. Short-Term Warning of General War, especially Surprise Attack on the US.

A. Machinery for Short-Term Warning. To guard against another Pearl Harbor, or another Korea, the intelligence community has a special Watch Committee, representing CIA, State, AEC, and the services and chaired by G-2. This meets every week to evaluate current reports for

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their significance as indicators of possible hostilities. The Committee particularly watches for a list of developments carefully selected as the most likely indicators of Soviet aggression. If the Committee, or any agency on it, feels that a more precise evaluation of some critical development is required, then a national estimate is done, coordinated by CIA. Thus we at least have the framework to give short-term warning.

B. Soviet Military Strategy. The JIG has outlined to you the two general strategies the Soviets might follow. On the one hand they might give over-riding priority to the air attack on the US and make the timing of ground operations subordinate to air surprise. On the other hand they might give priority to the ground effort in Eurasia -- most likely in Western Europe -- and use air attack at the outset only to disrupt US war potential and prevent the US from sending reinforcements to threatened areas of Eurasia. In either case they would almost certainly go after US strategic air bases, wherever they were, right away. If I may express my personal opinion, I would guess they would be more likely to concentrate heavily on the US at the outset, and that a sneak attack was a very substantial possibility. True, the Soviet military theorists have criticized the German concept of blitzkrieg as employed in 1941, and have stressed that the final outcome of a war depends on basic economic strength, solidity of the home front or rear, attention to political warfare, and such long-term factors. Moreover, there are Soviet experts who doubt Soviet ability to marshal a complicated and delicately timed offensive, air or ground, with strategic surprise. But in this case a heavy initial attack could potentially inflict critical



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damage on the enemy economy and home front -- not just gain territory as the Germans did in 1941 -- and thus provide a decisive superiority in long-term staying power. And, as for Soviet ability to marshall an all-out attack, this may not now be great in view of Soviet inexperience in long-range air warfare, but their training program has been going for five years and should bring them to the necessary state of training in not many more years.

C. Probable Warning in Various Cases.

1. Air attack only. At the present time we might get a few days notice through movement of supplies and aircraft to the necessary forward bases or through additional air defense measures such as deployment of radar picket ships north of Norway or in the Black Sea. But if the Soviets are able to improve the range of their bombers -- as they may do with a new heavy by about 1957 -- they ^{might} would operate from bases in the interior and we ~~would almost certainly~~ ^{might} not be able to spot last-minute movements. Similarly, continued improvement in air defenses will probably make any last-minute special efforts unnecessary over the next 3-5 years. So it seems likely that in a very few years we could expect no warning before the aircraft were picked up by early warning or something else that you gentlemen devise.

2. Air attack coupled with ground attack not preceded by mobilization. Same as 1. above, except that even without mobilization ~~291134~~ would have some chance of warning 


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In this connection, it should be noted that the Soviets have been piling up very formidable stocks of supplies and equipment in East Germany. So long as NATO relies largely on reserve divisions that cannot be ready till D plus 30, ground attack without any mobilization is certainly a very likely method of attack in Europe.

3. Air attack coupled with ground attack preceded by partial or full mobilization. In the existing state of intelligence, we might get two weeks notice of a ground attack in the West or in the Balkans preceded by partial mobilization, and about 30 days notice of an attack preceded by full mobilization. Those are round figures. ~~In Korea, the times might be a little shorter, but~~ ^{shorter} In the Middle East they would probably be longer. We would be no more likely, than in the case of air attack only, to have advance notice of the direction and nature of air attack. *Capabilities will tend to diminish as East Germany gets more difficult to penetrate.*

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